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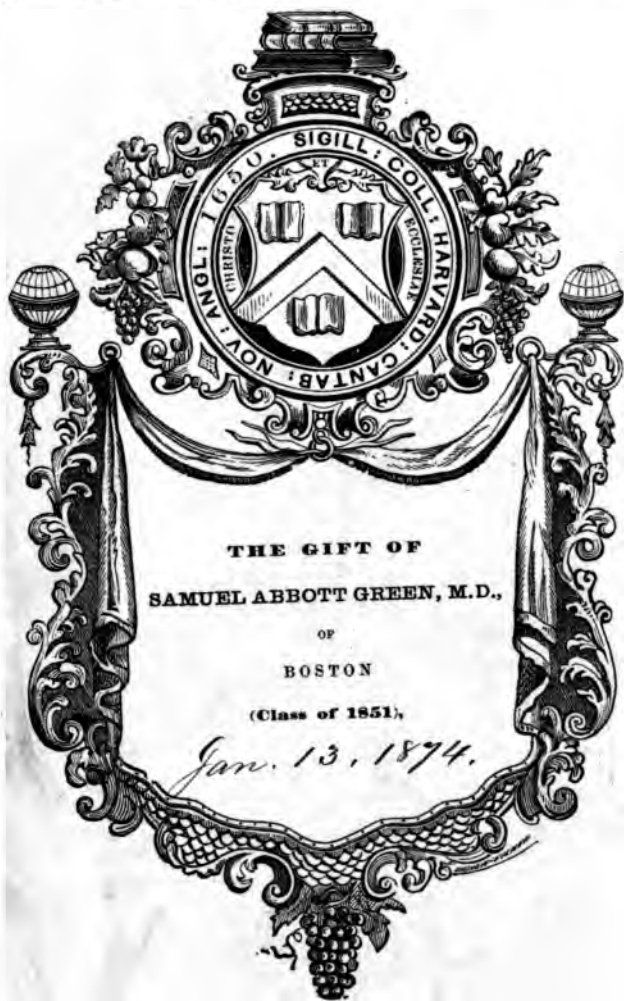
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Bd. 1874.







Gordon & Co.
THE ORGANIZATION AND EARLY HISTORY

OF THE

Second Mass. Regiment of Infantry:

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

GEORGE H. GORDON,

DEPT. MAJOR-GEN. OF VOLUNTEERS AND COLONEL SECOND MASS. REGIMENT OF
INFANTRY IN THE LATE WAR.

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SECOND MASSACHUSETTS
INFANTRY ASSOCIATION, ON THE 11TH MAY, 1873.

—♦♦—
BOSTON:

PRESS OF ROCKWELL & CHURCHILL.

123 WASHINGTON STREET.

1873.

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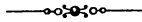
PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR THE ASSOCIATION.

P R E F A C E .

In conformity with a vote of the Association at its Anniversary Meeting in 1872, "that the Executive Committee be directed to request a member of this Association to prepare a paper upon matters connected with the history of the regiment, to be read at its next annual meeting," this paper was prepared. The subject was selected by the committee, without consultation with the author.



THE ADDRESS.



At this hour of social enjoyment I hope you will not be impatient if I exhibit a paper whose formidable proportions threaten not only to arrest, but destroy, all conviviality for the remainder of the evening.

If my effort to crowd an intelligible review of the early organization of our regiment into a thirty-minute recital shall be successful, it is more than I dare hope. Of course I have not been able to dwell upon personal achievements. I can only touch upon salient points in our organization; and even here, after the full account of that early period, given by our chaplain in his history of the regiment, I find it very difficult to follow without treading in his footsteps. I have endeavored, however, to refer as little as possible to topics treated by him, and have therefore made no mention of the past history of the lives of the officers and enlisted men.

When, on the morning of the fifteenth of April, 1861, a telegram from Washington to Governor Andrew, to send forward fifteen hundred men, was followed later in the day by a formal requisition for two full regiments of militia, there had been no thought or preparation for the service of other

troops to sustain the General Government. Gov. Andrew had taken steps to prepare the militia as early as the sixteenth of January, 1861, in his order No. 4, in which, you remember, all the members who were willing to respond to the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, when issued, in response to a requisition from the President of the United States to aid in the maintenance of the laws and the peace of the Union, were to signify it; those refusing, to be discharged and "their places filled by men ready for any public exigency which may arise."

On the fourth of February, 1861, the general officers of State militia, with a few citizens of military experience, were invited to confer with the Governor as to the best mode of preparing the militia for the field.

Soon after followed the act of the Legislature of February 6, 1861, authorizing additional companies of volunteer militia to be raised, and, upon the requisition of the President of the United States, to be marched out of the limits of the State.

How well and how promptly Gov. Andrew had executed his task was apparent, when the companies of designated militia, amidst the cheers of the multitude, disembarking at the various railroad stations, marched to their rendezvous on Boston Common, on the morning of the sixteenth of April.

I need not discuss, now and here, how inadequate the militia of any State would have proved for the war of the rebellion; nor need I enlarge upon their unfitness for the creation of a military organization for an indefinite term, and in distant States; nor to the absurd usage of the election of officers. Out of your experience came in time your con-

demnation. Out of my experience in the beginning came mine, when the multitude, with emotions, and heart-swellings, and frantic cheers, heard Gov. Andrew, in inspired tones, bid God-speed to the third, fourth, sixth, and eighth militia regiments on the seventeenth and eighteenth of April.

Thus early in the war, at its outset, at that period when for the first time the country as a whole appreciated that war was inevitable; the one thing that men of military experience felt, was that the old militia organizations must give place to new military organizations. To feel thus and to act upon it was as much a matter of course as for any commander to rally in battle a dispersed battalion, and to act upon it in such manner that the part each man could do, when accomplished, would form a perfect whole, was not only the part of wisdom, but of prudent foresight. My course was plain. It was to raise a regiment modelled upon the regular army of the United States; an enlistment of men; an appointment of officers; an indefinite term of service. By what law such a regiment was to be held together, fed, paid, clothed, I knew not — there was no law; but there was something above law; something that makes law — necessity. So I addressed myself to two essentials that were requisites for the coming law to act upon, — essentials in getting together and organizing in form a regiment of men; and these were — first, the assent and cordial co-operation of Governor Andrew to raise it; second, the promise of the General Government to accept it.

On the fifteenth day of April, 1861, at the State House, with the single condition that I would wait until these

troops were off, Governor Andrew promised me his influence and aid in raising a regiment of troops to serve during the war; the men to be enlisted; the officers to be of my own selection; their rank to be of my own designation. On the seventeenth day of April, before all the troops were off, Gov. Andrew made good the promise of his influence, by writing a letter to the Secretary of War, asking authority to raise this regiment, afterwards known as the Second Massachusetts Infantry; but then designated as a regiment to be commanded by Major Gordon.

The steps that followed, in their order, make up the history of the organization of our regiment.

What shall I select of all the details that bear upon the design, workmanship, and completion of the fabric? For I cannot, in the time allotted for this bit of history, do more than touch upon a few interesting incidents. I cannot tell even the half I know of the personal sacrifices, the heroic impulses, and the free, impetuous contributions of life and property, poured out with unstinting hand, by both rank and file, to aid me in my effort to organize our regiment. Men, money, sympathy, influence! It seemed as if all the wealth, all the precious life-blood, all that nearly a hundred years of social and intellectual development had garnered, were offered for the sacrifice.

I much regret that I have no reliable record of the order in which applications for commissions were received, but by the best evidence I have, the first applicant to me was Greely S. Curtis; he was followed by A. B. Underwood. Then came Wilder Dwight, followed within a few days by

George L. Andrews, who made personal application for the office of Lieut. Colonel.

The following names, with residences, I find among my notes, upon a sheet bearing evidence that they were written in the order in which I received the application. I copy the notes precisely as they were written in the spring of 1861 :—

William B. Williams, Q. M. Serg't, Cadets.

Dr. Luther Parks, Surgeon.

Charles E. Parker, Norfolk House.

Dr. John McLean, Roxbury.

Dr. H. B. Bryant, Tremont Club.

Dr. Hall Curtis, 85 Beacon Street.

Dr. L. M. Sargent.

E. C. Saltmarsh (has a company), 4 Cornhill Square.

C. R. Mudge, 45 Summer Street.

E. G. Park, 91 State Street.

Dr. Sargent, Rutland Street.

George A. Batchelder, Woburn.

Guy C. Underwood, City Hall.

Charles F. Cabot, 128 State Street.

F. W. Dorr, Boston U. S. C. S.

C. F. Morse, Jamaica Plain.

L. S. Jordan, 46 State Street.

Edward A. Whiston, Framingham.

James M. Ellis, 42 Court Street.

J. Parker Whitney, Tremont House.

N. W. Osborn, Salem Cadets.

Waldo Merriam, Boston.

Franklin Gibbs, India Wharf.

G. Q. Hill, 60 State Street, N. E. G.
 Richard Goodwin, Somerset Club.
 J. F. Pope, Harrison Square.
 Henry M. Tremlett, 289 Shawmut Avenue.
 Henry S. Russell (at G. H. Shaw's), 1 Joy St.
 F. W. Loring, 73 Mount Vernon Street.
 J. M. Rodocanachi, 33 Central Wharf.
 R. Morris Copeland, 50 School Street.
 N. T. Messer, Fort Independence.
 H. S. Everett, 32 Summer Street.
 Francis Wildes, Newburyport.
 James G. C. Dodge, Boston.
 Geoffrey Paul, “
 Forsyth Howard, “
 Charles B. Slack, Newton.
 H. W. Sewell, Winthrop House.
 Dr. Lincoln R. Stone, Salem.
 Henry Bowman, Clinton.
 — Cartwright, State Street.
 D. D. Farr, Rockport.
 Joseph Hayes.
 C. J. Higginson, 2 Louisburg Square.
 J. Lewis Stackpole.
 Robert G. Shaw.
 Thomas R. Robeson.
 William D. Sedgwick, Lenox.

These are names with many of which you are familiar;
 but that paper does not contain all who received commissions
 in our regiment; nor does it name some who undoubtedly

had been promised a commission at an earlier date than any named in it; such as Captain Abbott, who must have followed soon after Colonel Andrews.

Other names brought before me in letters of application, with dates, are : —

S. W. Waldron, on the 20th April.

Samuel M. Quincy, letter of May 2d, 1873, from Col. Holmes.

G. N. Macy, through letter of May 6, 1861, from F. A. Osborn.

Frank H. Tucker, applying for Quartermaster or Captaincy, May 6th, 1861.

George P. Bangs, letter recommending, May 6th.

William Cogswell, letter, May 8th, 1861, from Governor Andrew.

I find the names of Charles G. Loring, Jr., W. B. Williams, C. F. Morse, Rufus Choate, S. M. Quincy, Richard Goodwin, George P. Bangs, James M. Ellis, C. P. Horton, appended to a paper dated May 9th, 1861, showing the connection of those gentlemen with the regiment at that time.

The names of Savage and Cary, Captains; of Wheaton, Adjutant; of Hawes, Motley, Howard and Sawyer; do not appear in any lists or in any letters in my possession.

That Messrs. Wheaton and Motley were very early applicants in April, and that all the others were actively engaged in recruiting companies early in May, there is abundant proof.

Among the first to offer aid, his person, his counsel, and

his energetic assistance, was Wilder Dwight. It was on the eighteenth day of April, 1861, that he first made known, in lines written hastily on a scrap of paper, on my desk, his desire to go with me. The following is a copy of the paper: —

“I simply want to say that if you see any chance to get a berth to go with the first volunteers from Massachusetts, keep me in mind, and give me an early opportunity. That’s what I want, Capt. Gordon. Yours,

“ (Signed) W. D.”

And it was on the same day, though later, in an interview with Dwight, that I informed him of the Governor’s acceptance of my proposition and co-operation with my effort. It was on the same day, too, that Dwight, suggesting the possibility of procuring money by subscription, carried from my office a paper which pledged Major Gordon to the command of a regiment which the contributors were to equip, organize and support, until this burden should be assumed by the General Government. You know that liberal subscriptions were made, — five thousand dollars before the ink which declared the purpose was dry; and that this money placed our success beyond any fair probability of failure.

Before the twentieth of April, 1861, there was no doubt of our success. The great overpowering necessity had triumphed over all past forms and revered customs. Men of station and culture were willing to take such rank as might be designated, while the bone and sinew of our land willingly surrendered all claim of law, to take part in the election of their officers. Let us go any way that you think best, to fight for the integrity of our country, was their only, their single demand.

Now, it became necessary to consult with higher powers. The President of the United States, — could I obtain his promise to accept this regiment, as part of the army to be raised, our future was assured. What was the outlook for this? It was under the sanction of law that the President of the United States had called upon the militia, who were now forming at the front. But where was the law for the creation of an army subject to the rules and regulations governing the military service of the United States? There was none. What then? Was the President to wait idly, longing for authority to give life to the legions that throughout every hamlet in the Northern States were flocking to drill-halls, forming themselves into companies, and offering to fill regiments; or was he assuming the responsibility to give his approval, and order the fighting force to the front?

On the morning of the twenty-fifth of April, 1861, I announced my intention of proceeding to Washington, to tender in person a regiment of infantry to the President of the United States. Later in the day I found myself so crowded with work that I designated Lieut. Col. Andrews and Major Dwight to go forward for me, and fulfil my purposes. On the afternoon of the twenty-fifth of April, these gentlemen started, taking with them a letter from Governor Andrew to the Secretary of War, repeating the former's request of the seventeenth inst., to which no reply had been made.

The following letter to me from Major Dwight, dated April 25, 1861, is pertinent. It is as follows: —

“DEAR GORDON, — If you think you cannot go to Washington this P. M. Andrews and myself are ready to start under your direction, to bring back an

answer to the fundamental question, on what legal basis are we to rest? Please give us as early an answer to this question as you can, so that we may prepare to go.

"Yours, WILDER DWIGHT.

"G. H. GORDON."

On the thirtieth of April, 1861, I received from Philadelphia the following dispatch:—

"GEO. H. GORDON, 20 Court Street, —

"Have got authority; see full despatch to Gov. Andrew; rush right forward; home to-morrow evening.

"WILDER DWIGHT."

So the last condition was fulfilled; and, so far as I know, this offer of a regiment of citizens of Massachusetts, to fight for the country for an indefinite period, organized, armed and equipped, a present from the State, was the first offer of the kind made in this war of the rebellion; and may — must — have had a potent influence in shaping the policy which the President afterwards adopted. At all events, it must have brought sensibly to his mind that he could call with confidence upon the citizens of the free States to fall in and march to the front.

Accordingly, on the third of May, 1861, the President of the United States proclaimed that he would receive thirty-nine regiments of infantry, and one regiment of cavalry, an aggregate of forty-two thousand and thirty-four men and officers, to serve for three years, or during the war. So the voice of command was heard in the land; the policy was adopted; and it is to be remembered with pride, that our regiment was tendered to the President of the United States, first in the letter of Gov. Andrew, written on the seventeenth

of April, and again by messengers sent direct to the President, repeating this offer, on the twenty-fifth of April. It is to be remembered with pride that this regiment was not accepted by the President for the war, under his own call, on the third of May, for thirty-nine regiments of infantry; but it was accepted and authorized by the President, before the thirtieth of April, in response to our own application. It is also worthy of note, that on the nineteenth of April, 1861, Gov. Andrew, in the following letter, became himself, for his friend, an applicant for a commission in our regiment.

The letter is as follows :—

“COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
“EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, COUNCIL CHAMBER,
“BOSTON, April 19, 18

"MY DEAR COL.,— Dr. Luther Parks, Jr., of Boston, an old friend of mine,
wishes active service in his profession. He is a zealous and noble man.
Can you appoint him? "Yours truly,

"J. A. ANDREW."

At later dates and on four other occasions did Gov. Andrew make personal applications to me in writing, suggesting appointments, or applying for places for men; thus most emphatically endorsing his promise to aid me in raising a regiment, in which all the officers were to be of my own designation and appointment; the rank and file to be enlisted in such manner as I might elect.

The application next in time to the preceding was on the eighth of May, when the Governor applied to me to receive the "Andrew Light Guard," — a company raised in Salem by the then Capt. Cogswell; "as it will add," writes

the Governor, "to the completion of your command, to aid which I shall always be happy."

On the ninth of May the Governor applied to me for an appointment for Dr. R. H. Salter, as surgeon; adding, "If I were selecting a regiment, he is the man of all others I should choose as surgeon of a regiment." And again, May 16, in a letter to me introducing Mr. Fisher and Major Ayer, of Medway, the latter of whom had seventy-one men on his rolls. This company, discarding their own elected officers, took those I designated, and became Co. "E" of the Second Regiment. And again, on the same day, May 16, in a letter written for the Governor by an officer of his staff, in which Gov. Andrew applies to me to take into my regiment two German companies enlisted in Boston, now being supported by Mr. Urbino and others of their countrymen, who can ill afford it. "In these companies," says the Governor, "there are several officers and nearly thirty men who have served in the German armies, and are therefore trained soldiers." As the acceptance of this material would have been a departure from the policy I had adopted, I declined the offer.

I am sure, if time allowed, it would be interesting to give in detail the letters, correspondence and reports that flowed in upon me from the fifteenth day of April, 1861, to the very morning of the eighth of July following, when we left the State. Offers of services to drill; offers of services to fight; individual offers, and offers by groups and companies; German soldiers by Mr. Urbino, and French veterans by Col. Fletcher Webster; applications for a first or second lieutenancy in an infantry regiment from a man who had

commanded ships varying in size from six hundred to eighteen hundred tons; applications for a first or second lieutenancy from a man who says, to use his own words; "Anything that money or political influence can do to obtain this will not be wanting;" and an offer, the last that I will allude to, from a single applicant, who signed himself under the somewhat indefinite name of Volunteer. He addressed me with exhaustive epithets of his gratitude to his country, and as weighed down with a sense of his duty in this hour, which he paints with darker hues than Milton in his conception of the bottomless pit; ending with touching pathos, by declaring that his "tail" is soon told; he begs the loan of a trifle of twenty dollars to enable him to leave where he is now boarding, as he was "only one of three or more hundred over the borders, who wished to join my ranks to put the traitor down." You may imagine that I preferred to leave these hundred men in pawn for their board. Who knows but some months later whether they were not more successful in the halcyon days of hundreds of dollars' worth of bounty?

As interesting, I say, as it might be to give all these details, whether in reports of our own officers at their various recruiting stations, letters of inquirers, letters offering money and aid, and clothing, I cannot pause longer on this branch of our subject, but must hasten on with a word of our encampment in West Roxbury.

On the ninth of May, 1861, moved by the conviction that the men and officers selected for our regiment should be brought together in camp, I directed Mr. R. M. Copeland, designated for the office of quartermaster for the regiment,

to find within a convenient distance of Boston a suitable spot for a camping-ground for a regiment.

In our chaplain's record of the regiment he gives the numbers of enlisted men on the date of their arrival at camp, as follows : —

Capt. Abbott,	full,	May 11.
“ Cogswell,	75 men,	“ 14.
“ Savage,	42 “	“ 14.
“ Whitney,	78 “	“ 14.
“ Underwood,	82 “	“ 15.
“ Quincy,	80 “	“ 20.

I find among my papers a sheet, on one side of which, in my own handwriting, is a list of all the proposed officers of the regiment from the Colonel to the last Second Lieutenant, and on the other side a statement of the condition of the companies, as follows : Abbott, full ; Quincy, probably full ; Savage, 80 ; Curtis, 80 ; Cary, Lowell men, 80 ; Underwood, 82 ; Tucker, 33 ; Goodwin, not noted ; Whitney, full ; Cogswell, full.

The date of this paper, unfortunately it is a matter of surmise, must have been later than the 14th of May, for, then, by the history of the Second, Capt. Savage had but 42 men, but the whole record shows such a condition of numbers of enlisted men, on the 9th of May, that an encampment became a necessity.

To my letter of the 9th, Mr. Copeland replied, that he would immediately start out to find an encampment ; and “shall get into Boston some time this afternoon,” he added, “with one found.” Fortunately for us, the ground on which Mr. Copeland happened was the historic Brook Farm, in

West Roxbury. Easily accessible, though isolated, its surface diversified with hill and vale, the spot was admirably adapted to all the requirements of an encampment. I can bring before me now the commanding eminence for the officers; the level ground for the companies; the even and ample parade ground for a thousand men; the extensive drill-ground; the appropriate buildings, from the protecting hospital to the instructive guard-house. I can recall them in all the poetry of a romance, which the pen of Hawthorne, in the wildest hours of his most exuberant fancy, could never excite in the pages of his Blithedale story. I can see them, too, in a reality which has forever and forever exorcised the fitful play-day of the idle dreamers who preceded us.

Brook Farm is to me, forever, hereafter, holy ground. It is consecrated by our occupancy; it is redeemed by the solemn tread of our columns upon its green sod; while its story shall live as an organ strain in the grand epic of American liberty.

Fittingly did the saluting gun baptize our new encampment for its new birth, as, on the eleventh of May, 1861, the day we celebrate as our anniversary, when the first company of our regiment, detailed to take possession, came in sight, under command of its Captain, — Abbott of Lowell, — a single piece of artillery, borrowed from the City of Roxbury, manned by volunteer gunners, awoke the slumbering scene with a national salute.

Then the stars and stripes were given to the breeze, and Brook Farm was baptized, — Camp Andrew. On Sunday, the twelfth of May, Capt. Abbott made to me his first report of the condition of matters in camp.

"We reached camp," he says, "about four o'clock Saturday afternoon (the 11th). The flag-staff was raised, the flag saluted, and a national salute fired at sunset. We did not receive any supper," he says, "until about eight, but when it came it was excellent, and has since so continued. The men," he tells me, "have behaved excellently; have cheerfully obeyed my orders, and found something to amuse themselves with." The number of men now (May 12, 1861) in camp, he enumerates as follows: officers commissioned, 5; non-commissioned, 8; musicians, 2; privates, 72; total, 87. If I will give the order, he adds, since the tent equipage is ready, he will put the men in camp immediately.

Between the twelfth and twentieth of May, the site of the encampment was selected, and the permanent regimental camp established.

I have said that on the third of May, the President of the United States called, by proclamation, for forty-two thousand and thirty-four volunteers; and as our regiment was accepted under that call, and provided for by a subsequent act of Congress, I must beg your indulgence for a moment while I follow the War Department in its relations with the State, when it touches upon our regiment. On the fourth of May, 1861, the War Department issued a general order, No. 15, in which rules were laid down for the organization of the volunteer force of forty-two thousand and thirty-four volunteers. At the same time it was declared that no more three months' regiments would be accepted.

Governor Andrew, before the proclamation, had urged the General Government to accept other regiments in addition to ours. On the twenty-fifth of April, he had written the

Secretary of War, "In addition to raising Gordon's regiment, we can send you four thousand more troops, within a very short time after receipt of a requisition for them."

On the second of May, Mr. Boutwell wrote Gov. Andrew from Washington, that Mr. Cameron, Secretary of War, agreed to authorize Massachusetts to raise two regiments in addition to ours, but that a cabinet meeting prevented completion of the orders; but it was not until the fifteenth of May, 1861, that any official designation or call was made from Washington for any other regiments for three years, or during the war, save for our own.

On the above date the following letter was written Gov. Andrew : —

"WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, May 15, 1861.

GOVERNOR JOHN A. ANDREW, Boston : —

"DEAR SIR,—I have the honor to forward you, enclosed herewith, the plan of organization of the volunteers for three years, or during the war. Six regiments are assigned to your State, making, in addition to the two regiments of the three months' militia already called for, eight regiments.

"It is important to reduce rather than enlarge this number, and in no event to exceed it; let me earnestly recommend to you, therefore, to call for no more than eight regiments, of which six are to serve for three years, or during the war, and, if more are already called for, to reduce the number by discharges.

"In making up the quota of three years' men, you will please act in concert with the mustering officers sent to your State, who will represent this department.

"I am, sir, respectfully,

"SIMON CAMERON,

"*Secretary of War.*"

The fifteenth of May! We may ponder now on the forethought and the foresight which called upon Massachusetts

to discharge all volunteers save enough to make up six regiments, — the quota of Massachusetts, — in a call for forty-two thousand and thirty-four volunteers, with which to finish the war of the rebellion. But not for this have I called your attention to the action of the War Department in its efforts to obtain the first three years' regiments; but rather that I may introduce the circular letter sent from Washington to guide governors of States in the selection of officers for these regiments. I wish to show how we anticipated the virtues of the circular. It was dated in May, and advised loyal governors: —

"1. To commission no one of doubtful morals or patriotism, and not of sound health.

"2. To appoint no one to a lieutenantcy (second or first) who has passed the age of twenty-two years; or to a captaincy over thirty years; and to appoint no field officers, major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel, unless a graduate of the United States Military Academy, or known to possess military knowledge and experience, who has passed the respective ages of thirty-five, forty, forty-five years.

"This department feels assured that it will not be deemed offensive to Your Excellency to add yet this general counsel: that the higher the moral character and general intelligence of the officers so appointed, the greater the efficiency of the troops, and the resulting glory to their respective States."

It was without the benefit of these suggestions that I made my selections for officers for our regiment. It is not strange, however, that I did so much meet the conditions of the War Department. I presume that department spoke, and I know I acted, by the light of experience. I stood

then, I stand now and hereafter, upon this ground of the War Department : First, high moral character and general intelligence for officers. Second, the impulsive ardor of the morning of life.

I can add nothing to your own knowledge of the character of those who formed the first commissioned officers of this regiment. I could not delineate, however skilfully, a single trait, that you who have survived do not know, and have not felt in your daily intimacies. But I can say, that with two or three exceptions, from Col. Andrews to the youngest second lieutenant, I would not have exchanged our officers for those of any regiment I have ever known in the service of the United States, regular or volunteer. For promptness in the performance of duty, for zeal and application in seeking to know their duty, for courage in discharging duty, and for a presence and bearing among their men which, checking familiarity, inspired respect, the regular service never had superiors.

To dwell upon their achievements, to recall their well-remembered and well-beloved forms, were an easy as it would be an instructive task ; indeed, at this hour I cannot shut out their presence. They are here to the eye of memory in all their bloom of manly strength ; and yet, they are there, where they fell : Goodwin, so weak from sickness, that he was carried to the battle-line of Cedar Mountain, to fall with his men on either hand ; Dwight, the brave, the ardent and faithful, foremost in the most exacting demands of his rank ; Savage and Cary, Abbott, Williams and Robeson, in the tornado of fire that swept their heroic souls from earth, — all falling where only the brave fall ; Mudge and Shaw, with

youth, with frank and manly hearts, leading their regiments into the very jaws of hell without flinching or faltering.

At this hour they pass again before us, —

“In dim procession led,”

reminding us of a sacred companionship, born of patriotic devotion, nurtured in the fire of battle and strengthened by a common sacrifice; a tender, a sweet companionship, that admonishes us, as we bear the burden of our daily cares, to be true, to be honest, to be brave, and when, —

“At times unbidden notes shall rise,
Confusedly bound in memory's ties,
Entangling as they rush along,
The war-march with the funeral song, —”

we shall appreciate more and more, as time covers with its mosses the stones that mark the resting-places of our heroic comrades, that the proud record of our regiment would be a barren story without the history of all those noble souls — officers and privates — who gave up their lives for their country.

On a day, about the twentieth of May, 1861, I handed Gov. Andrew, at the State House, a complete list of every officer for the Second Regiment in the order in which I wished them to rank. Taking from my hand this paper, Gov. Andrew, in my presence, delivered it to the Adjutant General, with this injunction: “Let commissions issue to these gentlemen, in the order of rank as designated.” And thus commissions were made out, though the dates were irrespective of Gov. Andrew's order, which was prior, as I

have every reason to believe, to any order of his concerning any other of the then designated six regiments, irrespective too, of the date of muster into the United States service ; for, at the especial suggestion of the mustering officer, the Colonel of the Second Regiment was mustered into the United States service prior to any other colonel from the State, irrespective, too, of the rule laid down by the War Department, that the date of muster-in of regimental officers into the service of the United States should never be earlier than the date of muster-in of the last company ; for it is from this latter date that the commencement of service in the United States Army is determined. Upon this, Mr. Quint has shown, in the history of the Second, that, though some of our companies were mustered into the service as early as May 18th, as a whole, it was full prior to any of the designated six regiments.

It is not known why the commission of the Colonel of the First Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers was dated May 22d, while that of the Colonel of the Second was dated May 24th ; nor is it important, in the light of the fact that our regiment was the first mustered into the service of the United States, as it was the first accepted by the United States.

I have said there were exceptions, two or three, to be noted in the character of my selections of officers ; and as illustrating precisely wherein a man, without being vicious, might fail in the requirements of a good officer, I will allude to the case of a captain whom I had received upon his own application. [I allude to this case thus publicly, because of an official communication received from Gov. An-

drew before we left camp, that he had caused the full detail connected with the resignation of this officer to be filed with the public records of the State.]

This appointment was a mistake ; but I rectified it before we left our encampment, as I rectified another among the list of captains shortly after.

The case of Capt. ——— shows how much need there was of military guidance, to direct even the best of governors in the selection of regimental officers. How such a man as Gov. Andrew, with his whole soul filled with a single wish for the good of the cause ; a man who exhausted his life in behalf of the nation ; how even he failed to appreciate what was wanting to secure efficiency in a regiment ! I refer to the Governor's written opinion of my resolution and action in the case of Capt. ———, whose resignation I had demanded during our encampment, and forwarded with my approval to Gov. Andrew.

On one of the last days in June, 1861, Capt. ———, a commissioned officer of the Second Massachusetts Infantry, was pledging in his own tent one of the corporals of his company in a social glass. This complimentary attention from the captain to the corporal was, as I understood the former, that he might remove any unpleasant impression rankling in the corporal's breast, because the captain had insisted upon the performance of some duty by the corporal in some sphere or other, no matter what. Fortunately for the regiment, but otherwise for the captain, the colonel (passing at the time) witnessed this fraternal drink, and overheard the social pledge. It is perhaps needless to say

that Capt. ———, from some remarks made to him by the colonel, offered his resignation at once.

Repenting, however, of that which he had done, Capt. ———, before the Governor could act upon the paper, informed the latter that he had withdrawn the resignation, and would prefer to remain, drink or no drink, corporal or no corporal. It was under these circumstances that, on the first of July, the Governor desired my presence, and "would be glad to see me one-quarter of an hour earlier than the time appointed for Capt. ——— to call."

I had an interview with the Governor, but I am sorry to say our views differed very widely. The following letter, dated the second of July, 1861, while showing the Governor's opinion of what constitutes true discipline, would also reveal mine, if every sentiment in it were exactly and mathematically reversed; while the Governor's conclusion, that Capt. ——— had better not return to the regiment, on his own account, I most heartily endorsed: —

After taking a legal view of the facts, "in my judgment," adds the Governor, "on the facts, Capt. ——— cannot be deemed to have done more than to have inadvertently exposed himself to censure beyond his deserts; and it is, moreover, to be remembered that the traditions and even necessities of regular army service, by which Col. Gordon seems to have interpreted an act of no significance when judged of by the light of peaceful militia camp-life, are hardly to be enforced by harsh judgments, or ultimate penalties, unless for the purpose of reaching obstinate, or really and gravely insubordinate offenders.

"In the militia service with which Capt. ——— is familiar, the first officer in rank may in no sense be superior to many a person doing his duty of citizen soldier in the ranks. I cannot and do not believe him to have intended any such breach of the conventionalities of his position, as to imply a want of absolute respect for discipline and good order.

"I am satisfied, however," adds the Governor, "that the circumstances of this case, and the feelings springing from them, would render it unwise (having the best good of the service in view), that Capt. ——— should return to this regiment. It is a case in which I feel bound, in order to secure a good and prosperous body from injurious discord, at a moment when every citizen must yield everything to his country, save truth and honor, to accept this resignation, since it has once been tendered, and to grant to Capt. ——— an honorable discharge from a position which, under favorable auspices, he might have occupied with usefulness and honor.

"(Signed)

JOHN A. ANDREW."

This letter was accompanied by the following from the Adjutant General: —

"COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,

"ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,

"BOSTON, July 2, 1861.

"COL. GEO. H. GORDON, *commanding Second Regiment Mass. Volunteers*:—

"SIR, — By direction of his Excellency the Governor of this Commonwealth, I herewith transmit to you a copy of a document this day filed in this department.

"(Signed)

WM. SCHOULER, *Adjutant General*."

Now, to show how rapidly Gov. Andrew grew in wisdom, let me quote the following extract, in a telegram from the Governor to Senators Sumner and Wilson, on the third of August, 1861: —

"Can it be intended by Congress," says the Governor, "that volunteers in the field should fill vacancies by election? Where is to be the source of discipline," he writes, "when every candidate is seeking personal favor of the men?"

From the first of July, when he thought that pledging a social glass with his corporal was an act by a captain of a company of no significance, when judged by the light of

peaceful militia camp life, to the third of August, the Governor grew rapidly in wisdom.

From the eleventh of May to the eighth of July, 1861, our regiment was in camp on Brook Farm, in West Roxbury. To the discipline of that encampment we owe the general character and reputation which attended our regiment, wherever it formed an element of an army. If I say that reputation was such, that the Second Regiment came to stand with the commander of every army in which it served, as the one reliable, well-drilled and disciplined regiment, that the general commanding bore in mind and thought himself fortunate in possessing, I have only spoken in praise of the discipline of that encampment.

There, too, the novelty of the new life began to wear away; there old friendships were strengthened and new ones formed; there life began to reveal nobler purposes; the heart to beat with new and unfelt desires; while the grand, the mighty strength to be developed by a well-organized, compact and thoroughly disciplined body of earnest men began to show itself. And there, too, what tender, half-fearful emotions were suppressed in the multitudes that gazed night after night upon the long line at evening parade, — gazed in pride, though with swelling hearts, at this strange, yet heroic departure from the peaceful ways for which sons and brothers had been destined.

A few weeks of that strange but thrilling life, and the summons came. On the morning of the eighth of July, 1861, the tents were struck, the camp deserted. So like a dream had we, the first and last occupants of Brook Farm,

come and gone, that it seemed like the vision pictured by Scott of the clans of Rhoderick Dhu : —

“ The wind’s last breath had tossed in air,
 Pennon and plaid and plumage fair ;
 The next but swept a lone hill-side
 Where heath and fern were waving wild ;
 The sun’s last gleam had glinted back
 From spear and glaive, from targe and Jack ;
 The next all unreflected shone
 On bracken green and cold gray stone.”

At five o’clock in the morning, on the eleventh of July, we forded, for the first time, the Potomac, at Williamsport, in Maryland, and entered upon the sacred soil of Virginia. Our destination was Martinsburg, the head-quarters of Gen. Patterson, to whom, as ordered by Gen. Scott, we were to report.

Never again were we to make that march in such style. The officers were in full uniform, adorned with epaulettes and sashes. The ranks were full ; a thousand men, marching in close order, moving with the military precision of veterans, and keeping time to the music of a full band, which echoed through the streets. This, as we approached Martinsburg. As we proceeded, mobs of men, some with shreds of uniform, others with shreds of clothing, lined the road-way, and squat upon the fence-rails. I could but look with amazement upon this disorganized mass, which formed the grand army of Gen. Patterson, as they rushed from field and wood to stare and gaze at our band, our uniform, our steady marching and grand equipment of twenty-five or thirty new wagons, each drawn by four showy horses. As we made

our way to the spot designated for our encampment, an increasing mob of Pennsylvanians thronged the streets, surrounded the outer lines of camp, to stare at our sentinels walking their posts as sentinels should ; and then to mutter half in rage and half in vexation that troops have come among them who obey the orders of their officers. Adjoining us, however, are camps, where men in homespun, calling themselves sentinels, are squatting on the ground like Darwin's great progenitor. They eat on post, sit or squat on post, smoke and sleep on post, sing, talk and laugh, and leave their posts, as the humor suits them. Of what goes on around or within their lines they are cheerfully oblivious and wonderfully indifferent.

From acres of such encampments rise, during the night, song and laughter and boisterous shouts. Lights flash out, men come and go, and all goes merrily on ; while within our lines not a sound rises nor a whisper is heard ; not a light burning nor a sentinel who is not walking his round.

On the 14th of July, 1861, three days from our arrival at Martinsburg, the order was given to march south to Bunker Hill en route to Winchester, to engage Joe Johnston, the rebel commander of forces there.

While the tents were being packed, while wagons filled the parade-ground, and luggage encumbered the earth, while there was motion everywhere, as far as the eye could see ; galloping horses bearing orderlies with despatches, artillery rumbling, and long lines of infantry moving out to the inspiring militia muster melody of jingling kettle-drums, screeching fifes, and roaring base, a sharp-featured, and sombre person, dressed in the prevailing butternut-colored

homespun of Virginia, shying up towards the Colonel of the Second Massachusetts Regiment, demanded a settlement : first, for the fence-rails the regiment had burned ; second, for the green grass they had trampled down ; and third, for an extra cost for ploughing in the coming spring, the soil had been trodden down so hard. As we were then carrying on war upon peace principles, with assurances that we warred not upon the institutions of the South, nor upon their citizens, nor upon their property ; as we were just from Massachusetts, where we were not accustomed to trespass upon, or take a man's property without paying for it, the Virginian was paid, paid all he asked, paid upon his own estimates, paid in gold, and his vouchers are now on file in Washington, in settlement of the regimental quartermaster's accounts.

I am, at least I was once, inclined to think the owner of so much of the sacred soil as we encamped on, must have thought our kind of invasion would pay well. If those men had not soon begun to shoot so many of their best customers as finally to make us mad, I doubt not we should have been paying for the ploughing of Virginia fields to-day.

It having been found by Gen. Joe Johnston that he could do us much more injury by uniting his forces with the troops of Beauregard than by remaining at Winchester, he did not trouble himself much about our appearance in the north of that noted town, but made all his preparations to leave. Some one evidently thought Johnston would prefer Patterson to McDowell ; Winchester to Washington ; and so Johnston pretended ; but without impairing his ability to effect a union with Beauregard, he persuaded Patterson to place him-

self where he could not reinforce McDowell, when he gently and joyously moved south and east for Manassas.

This bit of deception, unchivalric for chivalry, sent our regiment to Harper's Ferry. We were the first Union regiment, after the rebellion broke out, to enter there. The day after our arrival at Charlestown, to wit, on the morning of the eighteenth of July, 1861, I was ordered to occupy Harper's Ferry with the Second Massachusetts Regiment, and assume command of the town. We approached with all the pomp and circumstance we could muster. The scene was striking. In our front, where the Shenandoah joins the Potomac, lofty hills, rising abruptly, stood like battlements around this singularly picturesque locality.

The mountains were still rich with their gorgeous coloring; but by the river side, where busy industry had plied its peaceful craft, waste and desolation met our gaze. Where the handsome railroad bridge spanned the Potomac, we now saw blackened piers. Government workshops, torn down or roofless, their walls cracked by fire, marked the desolating spirit that had moved abroad. But few of the public buildings remained; among them was the small brick engine-house at the Virginia end of the railroad bridge, noteworthy as the spot on which old John Brown, of famed memory, whose soul has so long been marching on, made his last stand in his attempt to invade Virginia. We had followed John Brown's invasion and were now gazing upon his guard-house; looking across the Potomac, up the Maryland heights, upon the little low farm-house where the German Unseld lived, to whom John Brown said, "I am a geologist, and am looking here for precious minerals and ores;" then turning

to the school-house by the Maryland shore, we saw where John Brown hid the rifles presented by Massachusetts donors.

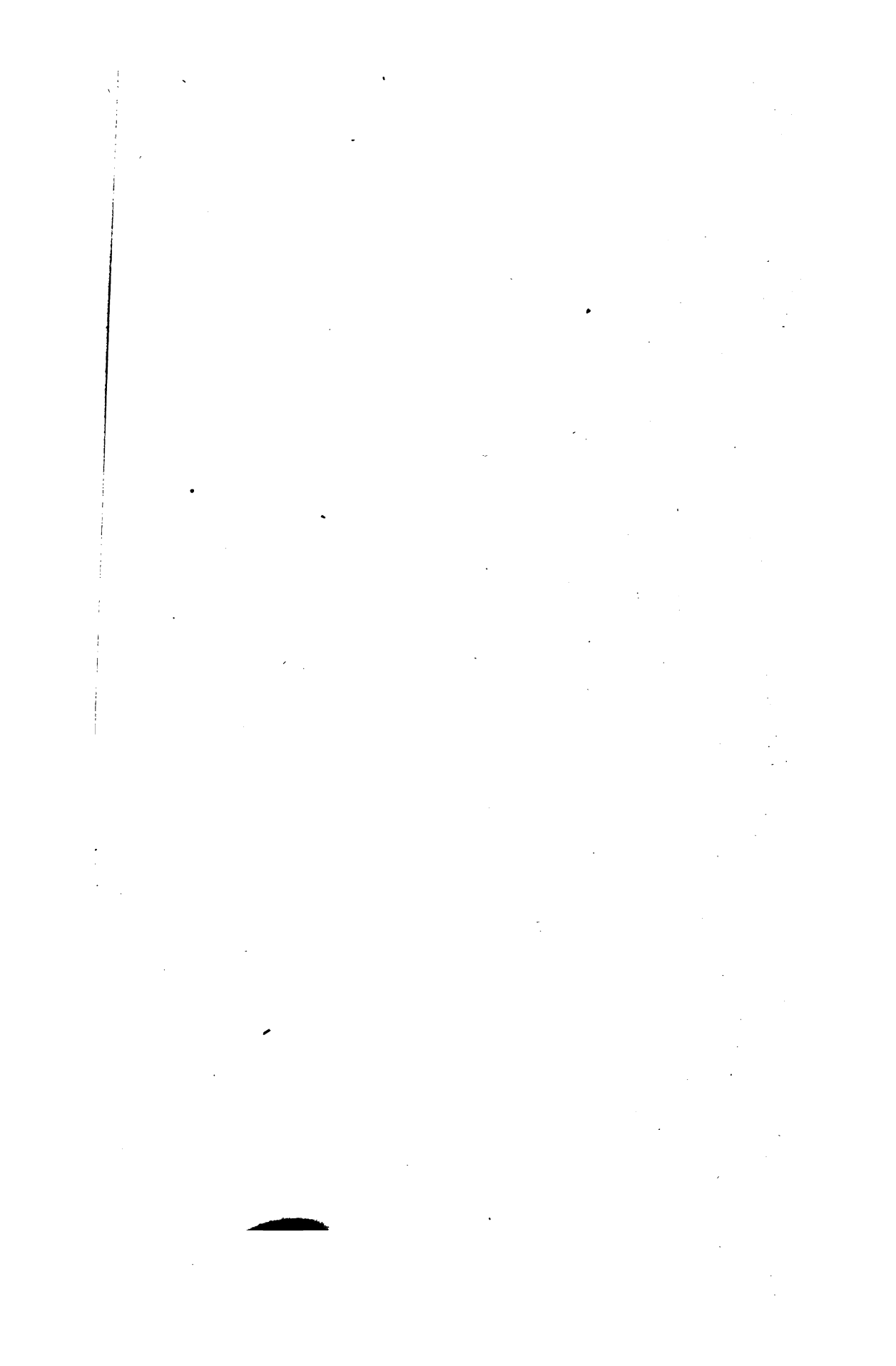
At Charlestown, where this old man was executed, and at Harper's Ferry, the site of his quixotic efforts, I was profoundly impressed that this Massachusetts regiment had followed so quickly in his track. As we entered the town, the citizens gathered in our pathway and shouted, Welcome! Wreaths of flowers were thrown to the troops, and garlands encircled the neck of the horse that bore the commanding officer. We entered as conquerors receiving an ovation. Our band played its most patriotic airs, while the streets rang with shouts of the multitude. So did the Virginians of Harper's Ferry receive the first northern regiment that entered during the war.

At the most prominent point of our route, a young lady presented the regiment with a national color, accompanying it with an address. The music of the "Star-spangled banner" filled and swelled in every heart as our color-bearer accepted the offering.

Then came the news that Joe Johnston had reached Manassas, that there was disaster at Bull Run, and our troops, as they were called, were fugitives in Washington.

And here, at the end of our first campaign, I will close this paper. Why our people so little appreciated the needs and requirements that make efficient soldiers, and why our countrymen rushed tumultuously to the defence of our national capital, and across the Potomac into Virginia, without uniforms, and without discipline, ignorant of the virtue of obedience, discouraging and decrying it in others, I have

intimated as the result of ignoring the method of creation and growth adopted by our regiment. It will remain for others to take up the story, and show how magnificent and well-appointed armies of thoughtful men were formed out of chaotic masses, that no longer clamored to be led onward to Richmond, but, like well-disciplined troops, with confidence in their leaders, awaited the hour of action.











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